

January 13, 2014

Bob Zeigler
SEPA/NEPA Coordinator
WDFW Regulatory Services Section
600 Capitol Way North
Olympia, WA 98501-1091

SUBJ: DNS 13-082 Whiskey Dick Wildlife Area Seasonal Road Closure

In my opinion there are some important facts left out and creative writing used to complete this DNS.

#8 The following quotes from Dr. McCorquodale's 01/11/13 Colockum Elk Study Presentation are proof that the Winter Vehicle Closure is not effective.

-Although the Whiskey Dick Closure did not appear to substantially delay collared elk from moving westbound from the core winter area...

-The timing of the elk departure from the winter range fit relatively well with the forage metric (NDVI), suggesting elk moved in response to plant community clues.

-Closure wintering elk typically left the winter range before non closure elk

In January, February and March 2013 there were up to 500 head of elk in the I-90 median west of Vantage. On 03/19/13 Washington State Patrol closed I-90 so WDFW could move 250 elk out of the median with a helicopter. There were 18 elk/vehicle accidents during this period. It doesn't appear that they are afraid of the 27,000 vehicles a day traveling I-90. This area appears to be an ideal location for a wildlife tunnel.

#11 WDFW Sgt. Mike Sprecher stated that there were no damage complaints/claims in 2006 and 2007 the two years prior to implementation of the Temporary Winter Vehicle Closure in 2008. Increasing numbers of elk have left the closure area during the closure every year since it was implemented. On February 15, 2013 there were 2000+ elk on a private ranch 8 air miles from the western boundary of the winter closure.

If damage complaints/claims have decreased in recent years it is probably due to the changes in laws regarding claims and the implementation of the Master Hunter Program.

Currently there are 2000 elk on private land outside the winter closure despite the best efforts of WDFW and the Master Hunter Coordinator.

Here are several reasons (not stated) that the Colockum Elk herd has increased:

-**Spike Only General Seasons** started in 1994

-**All Antlerless Hunts** in GMUs 328, 329, 335 were removed in 1997

-**True Spike Only** started in 2010

The Management Population Goal for the Colockum Elk Herd is 4,500 animals. Dr. McCorquodale's study showed that 89% of the cows were bred. Even though WDFW admits they don't know how many bulls are in the population it appears there are more than enough. Bio. Will Moore's 2013 elk survey found 5712 elk. In an October 24, 2013 WDFW News Release Dave Ware stated: "Colockum elk herd is also above management objectives and is increasing."

Respectfully submitted by:

W. R. Essman
8770 Brick Mill Road
Ellensburg, WA 98926